



South Carolina Department of  
**CHILDREN'S  
 ADVOCACY**  
*Advocacy. Accountability. Service.*

# MONTHLY UPDATE

**Department of Children's Advocacy Monthly Update**  
*Connecting with and updating our community*

## A Message from the State Child Advocate



As the State Child Advocate, I am a member of the Child Fatality Advisory Committee. The unfathomable grief of losing a child compels me to share this information with you and to ask you for your help with preventing deaths caused by unsafe sleep. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 3,500 sleep-related deaths occur among U.S. babies each year. <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/safesleep/index.html> There was a sharp decline in the 1990s with the "Back to Sleep" campaign during which parents were told

to place their infants on their backs, not their tummies or sides, to sleep. However, the trend has changed, and too many babies are lost to sleep-related deaths, some of which could be prevented. Being a new parent is exhausting! If you know new parents, please offer to help. Particularly during this cold, dark nights during the COVID-19 pandemic when people are isolated, reach out to new mothers and fathers to find out if they are okay and if you can help. Please learn more about how common sleep-related deaths are and the safety tips for placing babies to sleep.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants sleep on their backs; that they sleep on a firm sleep surface; that they not be placed on the couch, sofa or armchair to sleep; that they do not share a bed with anyone; and that soft objects, loose bedding, pillows, blankets, bumper pads or similar items be kept away from the baby's sleep areas. For more information, see <https://healthchildren.org>.

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## Baby Safe Sleep Prevention Resources

<https://www.ncfrp.org/center-resources/quick-looks/sleep-related-infant-deaths/>

Safe Sleep for Babies, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/safesleep/index.html>

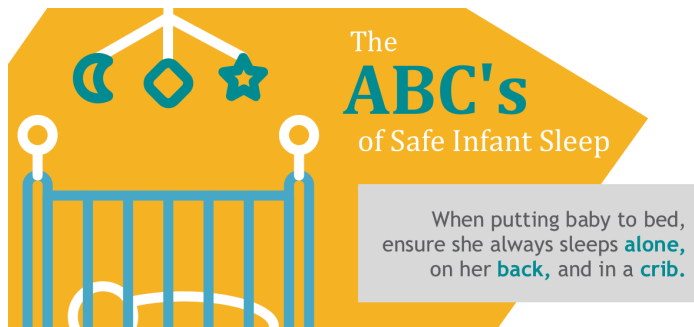
Safe to Sleep, National Institute for Child Health and Human Development

<https://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov/>

Safe Sleep, American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/campaigns/Safe-Sleep/Pages/default.aspx>

Please share this data and safe sleep recommendations with others. You could be preventing the death of a precious baby and the impact that such a loss has on the infant's siblings, parents and extended family.



## Department of Children's Advocacy Trains Entire Staff in Suicide Prevention



SC Department of Mental Health-Office of Suicide Prevention

January 14 at 11:14 AM · 🌐

Congratulations to the [South Carolina Department of Children's Advocacy](#) on being the SECOND South Carolina state agency to train its \*entire\* staff in suicide prevention!

This critical training was provided through a collaboration with the South Carolina Department of Mental Health – Office of Suicide Prevention and the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention-SC Chapter](#).

Thank you, Children's Advocacy, for your dedication to ending suicide in South Carolina! [#StopSuicide](#) [#HopeLivesInSC](#)



The Department of Children's Advocacy is the second South Carolina state agency to train its entire staff in suicide. DCA staff's completion of the engaging and interactive suicide prevention training was made possible by the S.C. Dept. of Mental Health Office of Suicide Prevention and American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. This opportunity has now been extended to DCA's volunteers. The Committee on Children's 2019 Data Reference Book indicates that suicide was the #1 cause of death among children ages 10 to 14 and #2 cause of death among children ages 15 to 17 in South Carolina in 2017. (JCLCC 2019 Data Book, [childlaw.sc.edu](http://childlaw.sc.edu)) Suicide is a preventable death, and we all have a role in suicide prevention. Efforts are underway to provide technical assistance to volunteer Guardians ad Litem and FCRB state and local board members to assist them with successfully complete the online suicide prevention training.



## Department of Children's Advocacy Publishes 2019-2020 Annual Report

S.C. Code of Laws Ann. Section 63-11-2270(7) requires that the State Child Advocate submit an annual report to the Governor, President Pro Tempore of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children detailing the State Child Advocate's activities. The 2019-2020 Annual Report includes information about the Agency's communications plan, Investigations Unit, and interaction with other child-serving agencies as well as highlights regarding the Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program, Continuum of Care, and Foster Care Review Board. The Department of Children's Advocacy's 2019-2020 Annual Report is available for review on DCA's website. A big shout-out to the Communications Director Keywa Thomas for her invaluable help with the preparation and finalization of this – our first – annual report. You can also access it by [clicking here](#).



## Collaboration with Department of Mental Health (DMH) Provides Resources for Department of Children's Advocacy (DCA)

As a result of collaboration with DMH, DCA employees have been invited to call the Department of Mental Health's SOS helpline to speak with a clinician for mental health support. The SOS helpline is a support line to assist state employees at DMH, DCA, DEW, Vocational Rehabilitation, DSS and DHEC. During the Coronavirus pandemic, many state employees are experiencing stress related to their personal and professional lives, and DCA is grateful for the collaboration and clinical help from DMH staff during these unprecedented times.



## Department of Social Services (DSS) and Department of Children's Advocacy (DCA) Guardian ad Litem Program Prepare for Joint Training Sessions

DSS and DCA will be hosting joint regional trainings for DSS and Guardian ad Litem Program staff and volunteers in March and April 2021. DSS State Director Mike Leach and DSS regional leadership will join the DCA Guardian ad Litem Team for four regional sessions. The DSS/GAL Joint Collaboration and Education meetings will occur via Microsoft Teams.



## FY 2021-22 Budget Request Presented at Subcommittee Hearing



The 124th session of the South Carolina General Assembly convened on January 12, 2021. DCA Director Amanda Whittle testified before the House Ways and Means Healthcare Subcommittee at an in-person, limited attendance capacity hearing on January 13, 2021. She provided information about DCA's Annual Accountability Report goals, budget requests, and efforts to mitigate expenses during the FY2020-21 Continuing Resolution budget. Some of the expense mitigation successes include: The Investigations Unit's use of a web-based portal for remote and secure access to DSS records without additional hardware or maintenance costs; Renegotiation of a Title IV(b) contract to avoid a request for additional state-allocated recurring funding for hiring contract attorneys to represent Guardians ad Litem; Modification of a Title IV(b)/IV(e) contract concerning service delivery by Foster Care Review Board and Heart Gallery; Coordinated procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) through the Dept of Administration; Submission of reimbursement requests through the CARES Act for COVID-19-related expenses; and Submission by HHS and approval by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) of a 1915(c) Medicaid Waiver on July 29, 2020 which provide a sustainable reimbursement rate for Continuum of Care's intensive care coordination. The FY 2020-21 budget proposed an increase of \$2,600,000 in recurring operating funding for Continuum of Care, and that request was not renewed in the FY 2021-22 budget request as a result of the Medicaid Waiver approval. For more information about legislative hearings, visit [www.scstatehouse.gov](http://www.scstatehouse.gov)

## SC Emergency Management Division Supports DHEC with Providing COVID-19 Vaccination Information



The S.C. Emergency Management Division, in support of DHEC, has activated their Public Information Phone System to assist people with locating COVID-19 vaccination appointment information. Members of the S.C. State Guard and the S.C. National Guard will be handling overflow calls over the next several weeks to help people make vaccine appointments. Visit <https://scdec.gov/vaxlocator> or call the SCDHEC CARES line at 1-856-472-3432 to find out how to schedule your appointment.



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*Growing a Community Where Children Thrive*